Report from the Happy strategy game in Mekelle

Practitioners training organized by Meta Meta

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# Introduction

The happy strategy game has been in Mekelle with a diverse group of water practitioners. The one week training was organized by Meta Meta (http://www.metameta.nl/), and the happy strategy game took a full afternoon.

# Landscapes

Because the participants had very different backgrounds, and some know some locations well and others don’t, we decided to create two virtual landscapes based on two areas where the participants come from. We took the FAO 6th level watershed of Addis Ababa (wet landscape) and Mieso (dry landscape) but did not communicate the location to the participants who were given the following maps, deliberately without scale, so that they could imagine the scale that suits them best.

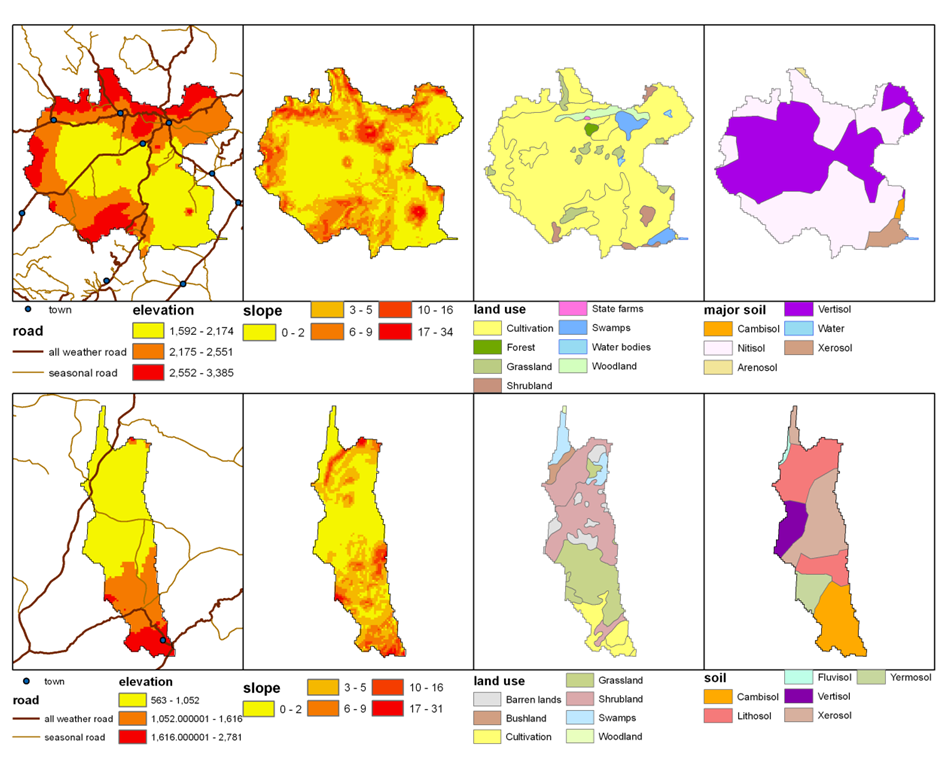


Figure : maps from the wet landscape (top) and the dry landscape (bottom landscape)

The full description of the landscapes and the cards can be found on the wiki <http://nilebdc.wikispaces.com/happy+strategy+game>.

# Rules played

We made four groups, two per landscape. Participants were asked to choose a card and join a landscape, where facilitators were ready to help with coming up with a rainwater management strategy. Exchanges were possible at the “practice bank” if at least 2 other landscape has refused the card.

Also all facilitator have been ask to enforce the rules in the beginning only, and relax the rules based on good arguments.

# Results

## Wet landscape 1

In the wet landscape 1, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location | Practices | Intervention | Explanation |
| Upslope | Woodlot | nursery |  |
| Area enclosure |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
|  |  |  |
| midslope | Cut-off drain | Layout and material |  |
| terraces |  |  |
| apple | Apple processing factory  Better market linkage | For keeping value added in the area |
| Beekeeping | Better market linkage |  |
| Improved breeds | Better market linkage  Artificial insemination |  |
| Improved cereals | Better market linkage |  |
| lowslope | Improved vertisol management |  |  |
| Tree nursery |  |  |
|  |  |  |

*New cards*

Innovations

* Beekeeping
* Improved cereals

Interventions

* Artificial insemination, to increase milk production
* Nursery establishment
* Apple seedlings
* Providing nursery material (different type of seeds, polyethane tubes, hand tool, house and storage room, manpower, vehicle). The objective to make biological material available to all
* Apple processing factory, to keep the value added of apple in the region and increase price to farmers
* Market linkages to sell apple other fruits and forage, provide animals and seedlings
* Provide layout material for cut-off drain
* Concrete material like cement and stone for terraces

The discussion turned around fertility management which has not been mentioned by the group. The strategy lacks in improving soil structure with technologies like compost. It seems that it has been discussed but not captured with the cards.

Find the video under : <http://youtu.be/Co5_uRE07-g>

## Wet landscape 2

In the wet landscape 2, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location | Practices | Intervention | Explanation |
| Upslope | Area enclosure |  |  |
| Terraces |  |  |
| woodlots |  |  |
| Multipurpose trees |  |  |
| Bee keeping |  |  |
| midslope | Check dam |  |  |
| Grass strip |  |  |
| Micro dam |  |  |
| Treadle pump |  |  |
| Wind mill |  |  |
| apple |  |  |
| lowslope | Roof water harvesting |  |  |
| Improved livestock breeds |  |  |
| diversion |  |  |

*New cards*

Bee keeping is suggested as it will help to have a better vegetation cover and give some additional income. It suits to mid and highland, on not degraded land, needs low land input, medium labor, low investment, high market access, low cooperation. It produces additional fodder.

Multipurpose trees were suggested, namely sesbania, lukina and fruit trees.

The discussion focused on the feasibility of afforestation in the high land due to high population pressure. It was also suggested to have a tree nursery.

This group did not come up with interventions.

Find the video under : <http://youtu.be/wNZB8swrDe4>

## Dry landscape 1

In the dry landscape 1, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location | Practices | Intervention | Explanation |
| Upslope | Roof water harvesting |  | Settlements are only in the upslope |
| Area enclosure | Needs capacity building and awareness |  |
| midslope | Pits and trenches |  |  |
| wells |  |  |
| Ponds |  |  |
| Sesame |  | Low water requirement, allows vegetative cover and increases income |
| Multi-purpose tree |  | Was added during the discussion |
| lowslope | Sand dam |  |  |
| Underground cistern |  |  |
| Treadle pump |  |  |
| Spate irrigation |  |  |
| Drip irrigation |  |  |
| mango |  |  |

*New cards*

They came up with the sesame innovation. The purpose is ground vegetation cover as well as income generation. It needs rainfall < 900 mm fits Xerosol, not degraded land, low labor, low investment, high market access and medium level of cooperation. It does not produce additional fodder.

They came up with one intervention card on “awareness and capacity building”. “As the technology is new, one needs to capacitate the community; one could make visits to other area and purchase industrial material.” Why is it needed? “the resource person does not have enough skill and knowledge, there is missing logistics, the community cannot afford the construction costs.

The discussion after the presentation turned around how to increase groundwater. Wells in the midslope should be seen as water harvesting technology. It is a livestock based livelihood, and the livestock can access drinking water at the sand dams but there is clarity where the fodder comes from.

Find the video under: <http://youtu.be/HadexXiX6KQ>

## Dry Landscape 2

In the dry landscape 2, participants draw the slope with the 3 zones and came up with the following strategy.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Location | Practices | Intervention | Explanation |
| Upslope | Roof water harvesting |  | Settlement only in the upland |
| Area enclosure |  |  |
| Spate irrigation |  | Settlement only in the upland |
| mango |  |  |
|  | Beekeeping |  |  |
| Chicken farm |  |  |
| midslope | Micro-basins |  |  |
| Trench |  |  |
| woodlot |  |  |
| terraces |  |  |
| eyebrow |  |  |
| Charcoal |  | From prosopis |
| lowslope | Underground cistern |  |  |
| Drip irrigation |  | Also by taking water from the swamp |
| Sand dam |  |  |
| Rice |  | Added during the discussion planted on the swamp |
| Camel and goat |  | Added during the discussion |

*New cards*

Innovations were beekeeping and chicken farm around settlements as well as charcoal made from prosopis (an invading species).

In the discussion it turned out that the group wanted to pump water from the swamp to grow crops. Other participants suggested to drain the swamp and plant rice. Finally a debate on the role of swamp in the ecosystem was discussed. There was a debate on the trade-off between feeding a hungry population and ecosystem services as well as if planting crop is really a good strategy in a pastoralist area.

Find the video under: <http://youtu.be/sfnDMlzxibs>

# Lessons learnt

All support persons, namely facilitators and banker were given the task to enforce rules only in the beginning and to relax the rule as the game goes on based on good argumentation. The banker after a certain time annoyed that dry land practices were not selected decided to become an NGO and went promoting some dry land practice he know to the dry landscape. This started a very interesting dynamic and discussion. Also towards the end of the game participants could take any additional card without exchange so that they could come up with their best bet strategy. It gave very complete strategies with detailed explanations

The game went very well. The level of sound in the room was very high. Lots of people moved across landscape with really identifying with one card. This allowed everyone to learn from both landscapes. Especially the dry land landscape started huge discussion about trade-off between feeding your population and ecosystem services as well as the trade-off crops versus livestock in pastoralist zone. Feedback from the participants was extremely positive. Initial concerns that people would not know about the practices was not relevant. Together the whole group new a lot and individuals could learn a lot from each other.